

WILLIAMS GOAL KNOCKS OUT ERRATIC WYCOMBE

By ARGUS

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Wimbledon 2

"NIPPY" little Norman Williams, a bantam of a left-winger, sped through a barn door size gap in the Wycombe defence five minutes from time to send the Wanderers reeling out of the F.A. Amateur Cup race. More than 5,000 Loakes Park fans bemoaned their fate. For the second time this season slack marking in the final seconds had led to Wycombe defeat in major cup competitions.

This could so easily have been a success story instead of a catalogue of woe. The Wanderers—who shook Dons visibly by taking a 23rd minute lead through Tommy Holmes—would have won had some superb individual efforts been rewarded.

But the Wanderers were typically erratic—dazzling one minute, infuriating the next. They played unquestionably the better soccer, but in short, isolated bursts. They could never match Wimbledon for sustained effort and power.

Yet this was a game of "ifs". If Michael Rockell's diving header had been just a foot to the right . . . if flying Scot Holmes, the game's outstanding forward, had had normal luck with his finishing . . . if roving right-winger Peter Kenchington had been marked and gagged before his final Machiavellian pass reached an equally unfettered Williams for the winning goal.

As it was, Wimbledon—dour as granite, ruthless in the tackle—allowed no "ifs". The Dons never let up for a moment, never permitted goalmouth squalls to unsettle them, relished their match-winning pull at wing-half and never ceased their grim battle to pound the Wycombe defence into submission.

FRUSTRATION

Much of the home play was sheerly frustrating. There was little contact between the half-backs and forwards, and Dave Thomas had his most mediocre game for a long time.

Short passing on a heavily sanded pitch was asking for slaughter against the Dons' halves, and Paul Bates and Len Worley—who repeatedly ran themselves into trouble—bogged down the whole line at times.

Rockell's dash was never properly exploited and Holmes lacked sustained support. But when he did meet Roy Law with an even chance he looked a thoroughbred to his bootlaces. Law, one of the very best amateur pivots, was dummied like a novice at times.

Wycombe's other hero was undoubtedly John Fisher who, one perilous mistake apart, had a tremendous game against his great rival Eddie Reynolds.

Super-confident Dons began hitting strong first-time passes through the Wycombe defence but the Wanderers survived the early barrage and then the Wimbledon rearguard began to creak.

PLAYING IT COOL

Ardrey flung Rockell off his feet with a thunderclap tackle and the free-kick was only just cleared. Then Holmes made Law look foolish with a shuffle and sprint and when the ball flew across the goal Rockell careered through the air to smack it inches the wrong side of a post with his head.

This "moral" goal denied, Wycombe kept it up. The ball bobbed frantically across the Dons' goalmouth after a Rockell-Worley move and Holmes, playing it cool, beat

everybody to it to tap the Wanderers into the lead.

Back rolled the Dons with aggressive attacking soccer which dominated the 15 minutes before the break. Pivoting quickly, Reynolds slammed a fierce shot into the roof of the Wycombe net for a 35th minute equaliser.

As the pace grew even hotter in the second half, Len Worley and Holmes were soon injured but Holmes' precision heading was still the biggest threat to the Dons. A mud-shrouded Brian Martin, looking like a Harlem Globetrotter, seemed Wimbledon's best bet as he pelted a shot just wide.

Both teams went all out for a winner and with Bates showing glimpses of his real form, Wycombe might have snatched it, especially when a Holmes header from Tomlin's cross shaved a post.

But when thoughts were inevitably turning to a replay, Dons' vigilance and endless probing was rewarded with a memorable piece of goal snatching by Norman Williams.

And so the Dons move on to Woking . . . but only just. Granted an eggcup-full of cup luck, Wycombe might have taken their place.